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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000506

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PRELIZ](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: PROVINCIAL GOVT ENGAGES MORE FULLY ON
SECURITY, RECOMMENDS USG ENGAGEMENT WITH INSURGENT GROUPS

REF: BAGHDAD 220

Classified By: PRT Leader Stephanie Miley, for reasons 1.4 b and d.

11. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

12. (S) SUMMARY. In the wake of senior tribal leader Sheikh Ahmad "Naji" Ajbarah al Jabouri's kidnapping (reftel), Salah ad Din (SaD) provincial leaders and security officials seem emboldened to take on al Qaeda in Iraq (AQIZ) and to garner security support among Sunni insurgent groups. In a monthly Provincial Security Transition Assessment (PSTA) meeting on January 30 between the Coalition Forces, PRT, and provincial leaders, SaD Deputy Governor Abdullah Ajbarah and SaD Grand Mufti Sheik Jamal al Dabaan said the residents of Salah ad Din "have come to realize that the Coalition Forces are here to help and that a political solution is the way forward." Sheikh Jamal also said that during the hajj he spoke with many insurgent leaders from the province who expressed a desire to have a ceasefire with the Coalition Forces and to begin fighting against AQIZ in the province. On the same day, on its own initiative, the Iraq Police's Emergency Service Unit (ESU) conducted a raid in what it terms was a terrorist training camp near the city of Bayji. During the raid, the ESU reportedly killed known AQIZ-affiliate Sheikh Touma, AKA Tumah abod Khalaf Al Azaury, and detained several other suspected terrorists. We continue to advocate for provincial leaders' active role in improving local security and to facilitate meetings, when appropriate, to bring other groups into the political process. END SUMMARY.

Monthly Security Review Leads to Anti-AQIZ Stance

13. (C) In a monthly Provincial Security Transition Assessment (PSTA) meeting on January 30 with Coalition Forces (CF) and PRT officials, SaD Governor Hamad Hamoud al Shakti al Qaisi, Deputy Governor Abdullah Ajbarah, and SaD Grand Mufti Sheikh Jamal al Dabaan said the residents of Salah ad Din have "come to realize that the Coalition Forces are here to help and that a political solution is the way forward." They attribute the gradual change in attitude over the past six months to the current brigade's less harsh stance and better relations with the local community, and believe the change in attitude was accelerated and solidified by the CF's perceived assistance in transporting the body of Saddam Hussein for burial in Salah ad Din. Sheikh Jamal also said that during the hajj he spoke with many insurgent leaders from the province who expressed a desire to initiate a ceasefire with the CF and to begin fighting against al Qaeda (AQIZ) in the province. Deputy Governor Abdullah noted that Sheikh Jamal has used his influence in the religious community to speak out against violence and sectarianism, which has made him an AQIZ target. They also suggested that the USG open ceasefire negotiations with insurgent groups to reduce attacks on the CF and to establish AQIZ as a common enemy.

IP Rolls up Major AQIZ Leader

¶4. (S) Also on January 30, the Iraq Police's Emergency Service Unit (ESU), an elite IP unit, conducted a raid on what it terms a "terrorist training camp" near the city of Bayji. During the raid, the ESU reportedly killed known AQIZ-affiliate Sheikh Touma, AKA Tumah abod Khalaf Al Azaury, and detained several other suspected terrorists. The raid was conducted entirely by the IP and without advanced notification to the CF. Previously, the SaD ISF had been hesitant to take on senior AQIZ leaders in the province and had only taken action with CF assistance. (NOTE AND COMMENT: It has not been confirmed that Sheikh Touma is the individual who was killed during the raid. Regardless, the action was the ISF's first major anti-AQIZ operations independent of the CF since October 2006. END NOTE AND COMMENT.)

¶5. (S) A number of close PRT contacts have also said that local insurgent groups have been talking with legitimate provincial officials in order to state their support for a ceasefire with the CF and to affirm their recently decided and apparently growing anti-AQIZ stance. Other reporting also seems to indicate that Sunni insurgency groups are working together to combat AQIZ in the province.

Comment

¶6. (C) SaD's provincial leadership and insurgent groups

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clearly see negotiations with the USG as a prerequisite to establishing a legitimate role in maintaining security in the province and to participating in the political process. The insurgent groups' underlying assumption appears to be that if they enter into a ceasefire with the CF and take up arms against AQIZ, they will somehow be legitimized, but with no mention yet of dealing with the central government on these issues

¶7. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Tikrit>.

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